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SEPTEMBER 2020 | VOLUME 11 | ISSUE 9

YOUR DONATION BENEFITS THE VENDORS.  
PLEASE BUY ONLY FROM BADGED VENDORS.

Local campers and activists organize  
for housing justice. **Page 10**



MEET YOUR  
VENDOR: **JALICIA  
HARRIS, PAGE 3**



# GROUNDCOVER

NEWS AND SOLUTIONS FROM THE GROUND UP | WASHTENAW COUNTY, MICH.

Eviction and racial discrimination:  
from slavery to COVID-19. **Page 4**



H.H. Gonzales, tenant and housing rights activist, addresses a crowd picketing the 14B District Court in protest of evictions. (Demonstration organized by Washtenaw General Defense Committee)



Photo credit: @kurtzobain / Twitter

## Oluwatoyin Salau: A Name Forgotten

I recently saw a sidewalk mural in Ann Arbor which was a list of the names of those black individuals who died at the hands of police over the past decade. The chronology of names ended with the name of George Floyd. The names were like vignettes that easily brought to mind newspaper headlines and broadcast stories.

But one name was missing from the mural. When Oluwatoyin Salau spoke at a Black Lives Matter Movement rally, it was in front of a crowd of protestors who were oblivious to the crisis of homelessness that she was facing.

Lacking the empowerment to speak of her own plight among a crowd of individuals whose sole focus was that of police brutality, she used her voice to speak on behalf of those who died before her. Her young, powerful voice started every demonstration with a plea that each victim be remembered. Her exact words: "I don't want their lives gone in vain." So she meticulously recalled their names at the start of each demonstration.

Yet on the mural of names circulating around the globe, her name is absent. She was not killed by police, but by a broader issue that claims more victims than police brutality. It affects women and men of color and every race. That issue, of course, is homelessness.

The loss of her young life is evidence



**LIT KURTZ**  
Groundcover vendor No. 159

that homelessness is a looming crisis. It further reveals that women who lack housing are preyed upon in massive numbers. It is little wonder that a woman in the BLM movement fell victim to a crisis that has been largely obscured by the media.

Her death further reveals that movements cannot be linear. Young black women who are sexually trafficked as a direct result of housing insecurity need to be given space in the BLM conversation.

Despite the fact that Oluwatoyin had been vocal and visible as a protester in the BLM, her death joins the thousands of people in America who die as a result of being unhoused. Many die in obscurity, with only a scant number of voices able to fulfill her request that their lives are not "gone in vain."

The attention given to her death was short-lived, with focus quickly

returning to the BLM protests. In just two short months, the outrage over Oluwatoyin's death has faded from the media, once again leaving the crisis of homelessness largely off the collective radar. Homelessness has had virtually no victories over many past decades and still lags woefully behind in legal precedents which would allow this segment of the population relief. Despite the large number of hate crimes against homeless individuals, homeless individuals still remain an unprotected class.

While racism remains in this country, it certainly does not eclipse the suffering endured by homeless Americans, many of whom are black. Through this movement, the death of Oluwatoyin brought to light the inescapable reality of the plight of homelessness, which is undoubtedly intertwined with every other crisis facing our world.

Oluwatoyin's name must not be forgotten. In her brief years on earth, she spoke about important truths regarding the homelessness crisis. Not only must her name be remembered, but the transformative words she spoke about homelessness in her last plea for help must be memorialized. Her simple statement, via Twitter, of being in "unjust living conditions" speaks volumes to the crisis that is before us now.

### Our Statement of Solidarity with the Black Lives Matter Movement

From its inception, **Groundcover News** has approached all its activities with belief in the following principles, as written on our website:

- All people have the right to dignity.
- Diversity has intrinsic value.
- Poverty is political — systemic change is necessary.
- Building community is essential to social change.
- Political effectiveness requires staying power.
- Solutions to poverty must involve people who are directly affected.
- Risks are necessary to create positive change.
- Meeting people where they are honors their skills and potential.
- We are committed to quality, professionalism, and accountability in everything we do.

We feel our attachment to these principles even more strongly today. If they resonate with you too, and you are looking for a way to make a difference during these life-changing times, please join us as a volunteer, supporter, friend or Board Member. To let us know, email: [contact@groundcovernews.com](mailto:contact@groundcovernews.com).



### MEET YOUR VENDOR



**Jalia Harris, vendor No. 484**

#### In one sentence, who are you?

An amazingly wonderful, resilient woman.

#### Where do you normally sell Groundcover?

Main and Liberty in Ann Arbor.

#### When and why did you start selling Groundcover?

I was referred to Groundcover in 2017 by Emanuel but only became active in March of 2019. Because it is flexible and a major support to vendors. I was homeless and it's hard to maintain working while homeless.

#### What's your favorite thing about selling Groundcover?

Being in the loop of solutions to the Ann Arbor community. Connecting with people while being productive.

#### What is a typical day like for you?

I usually go out to sell twice per day, a few hours at a time, during the hours that most people have a minute to spare, and ask for support.

#### What's the most interesting thing that ever happened to you while selling Groundcover?

When people like my effort but have no interest in the newspaper. I am able to get them to read!

### What would YOU ask?

If you have a question or issue you would like GCN vendors to discuss, email us at [contact@groundcovernews.com](mailto:contact@groundcovernews.com)

We will be featuring vendor responses in future issues.

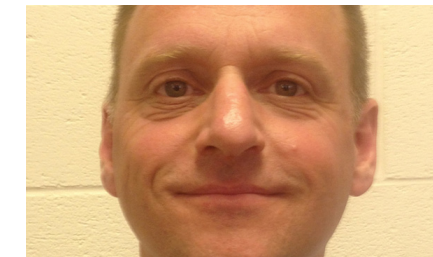
## Social ghosting

Ghosting is a slang term that usually means to suddenly, without explanation, stop contacting a person, removing yourself from their life as if you had died. It can also mean to actively ignore someone. On the streets, people often walk by strangers as if they weren't there.

Ghosting each other is a form of social contract. Ignoring each other is an accepted practice for many reasons, chief of which is to simply get from point A to point B without talking to everyone you meet, which is helpful during the Art Fair!

As a person experiencing homelessness, I found that being ghosted had a completely different consequence.

Our brains are wired for interaction with each other. If we are



**JIM CLARK**  
Groundcover vendor No. 139

rejected, it creates a harmful chemical reaction that causes an irritation in the brain. In other words, it is more than our emotions that get hurt when we are ignored or rejected; it's also our brain. That is what it felt like when I reached out my hand and it seemed unimportant enough to slap away.

During this time of crisis, when we

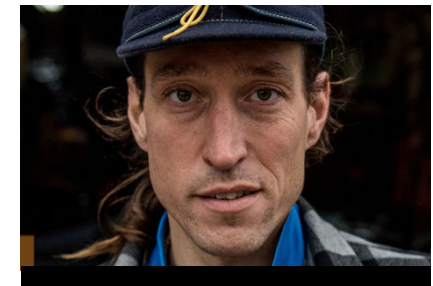
must put physical distance between us, remember that emotional distance can be covered over any length. It is easy to let that social connection slip while social distancing. This is especially true of people whom society already marginalizes. Be mindful of how important it is that we stick together. This means making sure everyone is acknowledged for the sake of our emotional health as humans.

On that note, I would like to thank the staff of Groundcover News for their gracious support these last few months. On the streets, homeless people look to the public for that dose of daily human contact. When the public had to take cover, the Groundcover News volunteers were there for us. God bless you all.

## Light at the end of the tunnel – Boober app and personal breakthroughs

Big things are happening with Boober tours! In December, three and a half years ago, I was walking into New York Pizza Depot and asked myself, "Why stop at a million-dollar company? Why not make this a billion-dollar company?"

So I threw out my business plan and started researching how to become a billion-dollar company. After a lot of research, I am now in the first phase of that plan: an app to call a Boober to pick you up. Future generations of the app will include the option of ridesharing in cars and will engage in social media



**KEVIN SPANGLER**  
Groundcover vendor No. 309

advertising that brings the community together.

I have been working diligently to get my driver's license back. I am in the final phases of getting character

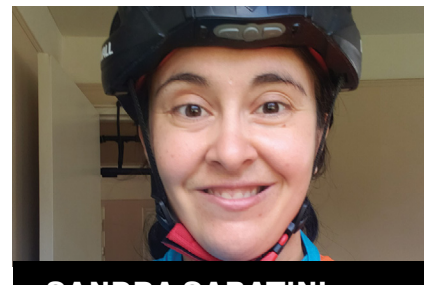
letters together, taking a drug test and getting a psychological assessment. At one point in my life I thought I would never get my license. But I decided to make the impossible possible, and changed my personality and things started to change dramatically. I previously owed \$15,000 in Driver Responsibility Fees. Those fees were reversed. I had warrants all over the country that I took care of. I also negotiated a debt that had a lien against my license down from \$8,500 to \$2,750. I am finally seeing the light at the end of the tunnel.

## Support my challenge to fight kids' cancer!

This September, I am taking part in the Great Cycle Challenge to fight kids' cancer!

Why? Because right now, cancer is the biggest killer of children from disease in the United States. Over 15,700 children are diagnosed every year, and sadly, 38 children die of cancer every week. Kids should be living life, not fighting for it.

So I am raising funds through my challenge to help these kids



**SANDRA SABATINI**  
Groundcover vendor No. 233

and support the Children's Cancer

Research Fund to continue their work to develop life-saving treatments and find a cure for childhood cancer.

Please support me by making a donation to give these kids the brighter futures they deserve. Go to: [greatcyclechallenge.com/riders/sandrasabatini](https://greatcyclechallenge.com/riders/sandrasabatini).

Your support will change little lives. All donations made on Sept. 9 will be matched! Thank you.

## GROUNDCOVER

### Mission

Creating opportunity and a voice for low-income people while taking action to end homelessness and poverty.

**Susan Beckett** — publisher

**Michael Corrigan** — assistant director

**Andrew Nixon** — editor

**Lindsay Calka** — layout editor

### This month's contributors

**Elizabeth Bauman**  
**Ross Bernhaut**  
**Jim Clark**  
**Lit Kurtz**  
**John L.**  
**Catherine Nouhan**  
**Bill Pappas**  
**Ken Parks**  
**Sandra Sabatini**  
**Will Shakespeare**  
**Kevin Spangler**  
**Aaron St. Germain**  
**Willy Will**

### Office volunteers

**Jessi Averill**  
**Audrey Carey**  
**Glenn Gates**  
**Elahe Ganji**  
**Rainey Lamey**  
**Robert Klingler**  
**Jon MacDonagh-Dumler**

### Proofreaders

**Brittany Bowman**  
**Briana Jackson**  
**Sandra Smith**  
**Laurie Wechter**

### Story and photo submissions

[submissions@groundcovernews.com](mailto:submissions@groundcovernews.com)

### Advertising

[contact@groundcovernews.com](mailto:contact@groundcovernews.com)

### Contact us

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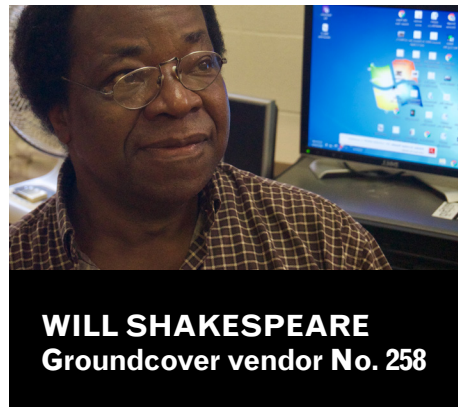
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**Office:** 423 S. 4th Ave., Ann Arbor  
**P:** 734-263-2098

# Eviction and racial discrimination: from slavery to COVID-19

*"A growing body of national research ... suggests that eviction is not merely a symptom of poverty but also a cause of it. People who experience eviction are more likely to lose their jobs, experience increased rates of depression, and rate their health as fair or poor"*

— U-M Ford School of Public Policy (May, 2020)



**WILL SHAKESPEARE**  
Groundcover vendor No. 258

On Aug. 5, Governor Gretchen Whitmer announced, "Today, I declared racism to be a public health crisis in Michigan and created the Black Leadership Advisory Council." She used the hashtag #COVID-19 and highlighted what Black and brown communities have always known — inequities caused by systematic racism can be deadly.

In May, when COVID-19 was killing more Black people than any other racial group in Michigan, Whitmer created the Michigan Task Force on Racial Health Disparities. In her earlier executive orders, which called for an eviction moratorium and water shut-off protections, the governor made the connection between eviction and the risk of COVID-19 infection. She was also cognizant of how the surge in evictions could lead to a surge of homelessness and housing instability in various Michigan communities, especially communities of color.

Emily Benfer, Law Professor at Wake Forest University and founder of the Health Justice Project and co-creator of Eviction Lab's COVID-19 Housing Policy Scoreboard (on which Michigan got a half-star rating for eviction prevention and housing policies), said in a statement released on August 7: "Ultimately, only a long-term solution for housing precarity can protect the millions of Americans who are accruing significant amounts of back rent and the landlords and communities who rely on rent payments." Benfer continued, "Either we agree that it is cruel to evict people in a time of pandemic or we don't." Benfer correctly observed that if there is no sustainable long-term solution to the crises of eviction and insufficient affordable housing, it will cause "the pillars of

November. Since mid-March, about "16 million Americans are without jobs, leading to a crisis of poverty and a crisis of homelessness," said Democratic Vice-Presidential pick Senator Kamala Harris.

## Eviction and race-based housing instability in historical perspective

Scholars and historians such as Robert Apthaker of Harvard, John Blassigame of Yale, and John Hope Franklin of Duke have provided detailed summaries of life and eviction anxiety in slave communities before the 20th century. It was obvious that slaves who disagreed with or disobeyed their masters would be evicted and removed from their close-knit families.

Following the Civil War in 1865, General Sherman's Field Order No. 15 tasked the Union army with planning and distributing 40-acre plots to newly emancipated slaves. This bold gesture at making reparations was short-lived; the proclamation was overturned later that year by Lincoln's successor, Andrew Johnson.

After slavery and the civil war, Black people who were demoralized and discouraged about the broken promise of "40 acres and a mule," and by the terror of Ku Klux Klan during the Reconstruction era of the 1870s, decided to flee from the South to the Northern regions of the country. The Great Black Migration was a massive, channelized flow of Black families away from Southern states to Northern cities in search of personal safety, freedom, housing and employment opportunities. It involved over six million people. The story is well-documented by journalist Nicholas Lehman in his award-winning book titled, "The Promised Land: The Great Black Migration and How it Changed America." In spite of their enormous contribution to the literary, cultural, political, and economic life of the Northern region, the new Black migrants faced pronounced racism and endured rental and housing market discrimination.

With tens of thousands of renters worried and anxious about being evicted and becoming homeless in Metro Detroit, the Chief Judge of the 36th District Court in Detroit issued an eviction moratorium order to protect vulnerable renters and homeowners during the COVID-19 period. The recent presidential executive order extended the federal moratorium for properties that received federal subsidies through the end of



**Governor Gretchen Whitmer worked with the Michigan legislature to set aside \$50 million from the pandemic relief fund for the rent payment portion of an eviction diversion program.**

The podcast Unmasking America's Eviction Crisis regularly features well-informed guests including Dr. Matthew Desmond, founder and Director of Eviction Lab at Princeton University. Desmond is the author of a Pulitzer Award-winning book titled, "Evicted: Poverty and Profits in an American City," whose ethnographic and statistical research were conducted in Milwaukee's poor and working-class neighborhoods. Episode 2's podcast description reads, "Eviction isn't without historical context. In vulnerable communities of color, in particular, displacements and denials of housing are phenomena centuries in the making. This episode maps the persistent line between racist housing policies, localized profiteering, and the devastating plunder of generations of wealth."

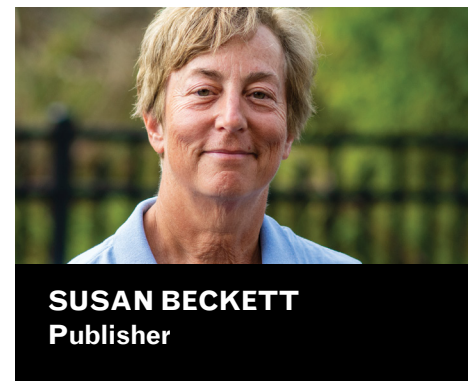
In his viral essay in June 2014 of The Atlantic, "The Case for Reparations," journalist Ta-Nehisi Coates, asserted that "until we reckon with our moral debts, America will never be whole." Coates also talked about the violent massive eviction known as the Tulsa race massacre of 1920. A prosperous African American community in Tulsa, Okla., was fire-bombed in the middle of

see **EVICTIONS** on page 11 ➡



Signs used to picket the 14B District Court (Ypsilanti) on August 19 in protest of evictions.

# Falling behind on rent or mortgage? Take action now!



**SUSAN BECKETT**  
Publisher

Fear of the unknown has been a hallmark of this pandemic, and it is exacerbated by worries of losing housing. Fortunately, there are currently ample resources to help people in financial duress keep their housing. State and County officials have been working together with judges, landlords and lawyers on finding strategies to keep people housed.

At an August 12 virtual discussion on housing affordability, hosted by Congresswoman Debbie Dingell and Washtenaw County Commission Chair Jason Morgan, experts explained programs and procedures to avoid evictions and foreclosures. Their dominant, overriding message was: reach out for help by calling Housing Assistance for Washtenaw County at 734-761-1999 as soon as you realize you might not make your next rent or mortgage payment.

HAWC is the entry point for eviction prevention services. Help is available. Don't let yourself get deeper into debt before seeking assistance. You can also call Legal Services of South Central Michigan at 734-665-6181 for advice. Their staff has grown to provide faster responses and more services.

Kelly Rose, Chief Housing Solutions Officer of Michigan State Housing Development Authority, outlined the \$60 million Eviction Diversion Program the state is implementing with money from the CARES Act. The program will work through the courts, so tenants can reach out for these funds once they have received any official document of the intention to evict or foreclose. These funds cannot be carried over to 2021 and are available now.

The Eviction Diversion Program is limited to those who are at or below the Area Median Income, which for Washtenaw County is \$100,000 for a family of four or \$71,000 for an individual. The program will pay back rent for eligible renters up to a cap of \$3,500. Renters who are at or below 50% of AMI will also have the next month's rent paid, up to a cap of \$1,200. Landlords agree to forego penalties and late

fees, and up to 10% of the rent due. There is a similar program for homeowners.

There are other programs and resources not subject to the same income and timing restrictions that do not require the eviction or foreclosure proceedings to have begun. Barrier Busters is a network of over 100 local service agencies, community groups, churches and more serving Washtenaw County residents. Visit [washtenaw.org/2818](http://washtenaw.org/2818) to find an operating agency. Contact them and they will help connect you to financial assistance!

Working with your landlord before any paperwork gets filed can also be a fruitful avenue to avoid eviction. "Landlords have been working with us," reported Teresa Gillotti, Director of Washtenaw County Office of Community & Economic Development. "They are in the same situation. They're small businesses and sometimes bigger businesses, but they need that cash flow, too. So the fact that this program that MSHDA created [Eviction Diversion] requires the landlords to provide a contribution ... some of them are doing that already. There's a difference in getting some money as opposed to none in this period."

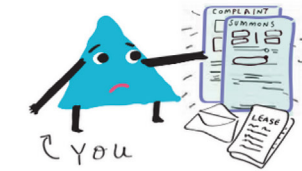
The initial eviction hearing is now an entry point to services. A representative from HAWC and a lawyer from Legal Services of South Central Michigan are present and available to assist. Having recent tax returns, pay stubs, picture ID, proof of what you have paid and proof of what you still owe will help expedite the income qualification phase and get the rental assistance quickly.

Judge Cedric Simpson presided over two dockets of eviction cases between the end of the state eviction moratorium and the virtual housing affordability discussion. He said only two evictions had been approved and neither were for being behind on rent. He has been very encouraged by all the County players working together and committed to keeping people housed.

Evictions that have been pending during the pandemic are not swiftly executed when the moratorium ends. In fact, those cases get a new hearing. In the first hearing, tenants are advised of their rights and linked to services — no one is evicted at the first hearing. Seven days later there is a second hearing at which the case might be dismissed or a judgment could be made. The judges are working with HAWC

see **ACTION** on page 9 ➡

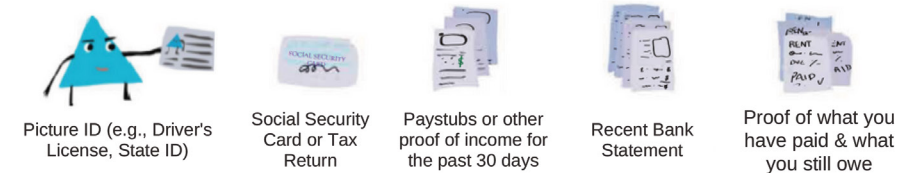
## ARE YOU FACING EVICTION?



Here are a few steps you can take to stay in your home.

### 1. GET HELP PAYING YOUR BACK RENT\*

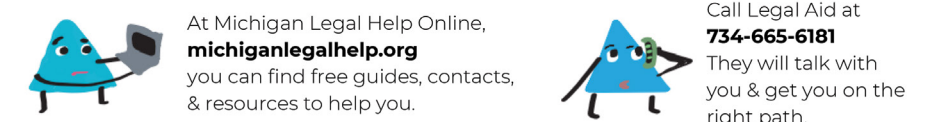
Call Housing Access for Washtenaw County (734-961-1999) and have as many of these documents as possible ready:



*\*Applying for these funds does NOT trigger the DHS public charge rule determination for immigrants*

### 2. REACH OUT FOR LEGAL HELP NOW!

Talk to a lawyer or read reliable online resources to understand your options & how to protect yourself.



At Michigan Legal Help Online, [michiganlegalhelp.org](http://michiganlegalhelp.org) you can find free guides, contacts, & resources to help you.

Call Legal Aid at **734-665-6181** They will talk with you & get you on the right path.

TRANSLATORS ARE AVAILABLE WITH HAWC AND LEGAL AID

## KNOW YOUR RIGHTS



- ARE YOU STAYING IN TEMPORARY HOUSING?
- DO YOU WANT TO STAY AT YOUR CURRENT SCHOOL?
- ARE YOU HAVING TROUBLE ENROLLING IN SCHOOL, OR GOING TO SCHOOL?

### Help may be available.



If you are staying temporarily with someone else because you had to leave your home, or staying in a motel, campground, shelter, or in an outside or inadequate place, you have special rights at school.



Those rights include:

- Staying in the same school even if you move, and receiving transportation to that school, as long as it is in your best interest
- Enrolling in school immediately without the documents schools usually require, and without a parent or guardian
- Receiving free school meals
- Getting help with school supplies and other needs



Contact your school district's McKinney-Vento Liaison to find out if you qualify for help.



Contact your McKinney-Vento [State Coordinator](https://nche.ed.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/SC-Contact-List.pdf) (<https://nche.ed.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/SC-Contact-List.pdf>) if you can't reach the Liaison or have other questions.



Road signs for I-80 east to Cheyenne and west to Salt Lake City in Utah. Photo credit: Sichen Shen.

ROSS BERNHAUT  
Groundcover contributor

“At the end of every hard-earned day, people find some reason to believe.” These words blasted from the Honda Accord sound system as we clocked our 400th mile on Interstate 80 in Nebraska. Dusty green plains stretched as far as my eyes could see, while charcoal storm clouds gathered overhead. Exhausted telephone poles were the only feature breaking the unending landscape, even as they were subsumed into it. It was no accident that this lyric belonged to “Reason to Believe,” the final song on American rock-and-roll legend Bruce Springsteen’s sixth studio album, “Nebraska.” The album, although rife with tales of desperation, demise and ethical dilemmas, concludes on this more hopeful note.

Growing up in New Jersey, the Boss was a regular feature in my household, and his music offered me a lyrical image of what the country I had never seen might be like. Indeed, prior to this road trip from Ann Arbor to northern Utah, the middle of the USA was terra incognita to me. For the three days during which I-80 was home, I found myself asking this question: at a time of a global pandemic, record unemployment, intensely partisan and acrimonious politics, raw and unhealed historical wounds and unthinkable social injustices, what gives me reason to believe?

At first, I thought I might have some

fortuitous revelation or profound experience on this road trip to shed light on it all: I did not. All I have to show for the journey, aside from the mileage on the car, are memories of the kindness of strangers. But that alone proved enough and gave me reason to believe.

Unlike demonstrating compassion toward your sibling, spouse, friend, parent, teacher, boss, employee or colleague — all of which will have tangible consequences in your relationships and life — being kind to a stranger is a good deed one does because of their character. From this, there are no immediate rewards to reap. An act of kindness or generosity to a stranger is the ultimate selfless gesture, since it is unlikely ever to be repaid, at least by the person to whom you’ve shown the kindness. Karmic credits and providential boons are a different story.

On this trip, my partner and I benefited from the unabating kindness of many strangers. Gas station employees taught us how to check and fill our tire air pressure for the first time, waitstaff hospitably kept the last restaurant in Cheyenne open for us after closing time on July 4 and a hotel receptionist made special accommodations for us to have a room with panoramic views of the fireworks later that evening. At a time when crossing state borders is, due to COVID-19, considered risky business, a staff member at a restaurant in Des Moines, Iowa told me he was excited to wait on us after seeing my “908” (i.e., New



“The Buffalo Mural” in downtown Cheyenne, Wyoming. Photo credit: Ross Bernhaut.

Jersey) area code. Unfortunately, this establishment was only offering takeout on the day of our arrival.

Beyond the incentivized kindness of those in the service industry, individuals extended both curiosity and empathy to us on our journey. These sentiments manifested themselves in doors held open, transactions accompanied by superfluous conversations and pleasantries, lingering elevator exchanges and an appreciated (if ultimately declined) invitation to explore on someone’s boat the Flaming Gorge Reservoir that straddles Wyoming and Utah.

Why recount these mundanities that most would experience without the batting of an eyelash?

In times when social interaction is distant, education is remote, work is from

home, smiles are masked and the threat of viral infection is ubiquitous, such simple gestures of benevolent humanity take on fresh significance. Splendid isolation may be the new norm, but displaying care and concern for others is the only way we will be able to collectively survive this pandemic, along with the countless other social, economic and environmental ills plaguing our planet.

The status of travel in a world with COVID-19 will undoubtedly remain tentative for some time. Still, the paramount attitudes that are, to my mind, requisite for meaningful travel are more relevant than ever before. Travel or no travel, it is the kindness of strangers, their open-heartedness and compassion, that give me a reason to believe.

# Right people, right moment, right part of the song

WILL WILLIAMS,  
AKA WILLY WILL  
Groundcover contributor

When I was in Ann Arbor, I bought the UE BOOM Bluetooth speaker. It’s about the size of a 16-ounce beer can and with Spotify, it cranks up LOUD! From a block away, you could always tell it was me coming down Main St. Some street people called me DJ Willy.

My favorite pastime is playing the right song, at the right moment, for the right person when they least expect it — like when they’re daydreaming — and watch them light up. It has to be the right part of the song when it really takes off. And then, I crank it.

With my speaker’s sound clarity, it’s like the band is right there on the street with you. It’s like it shocks them, envelops them, and takes them by surprise. You can’t fight the power and mischief of Willy Will!

Here we go. Coming across the intersection of Liberty and Fourth near Roos Roast and I see my target ahead: a small family with two young, blond girls about eight and six years old. The song is “Shower the People” by James Taylor.

Right as the song goes, “Shower the people you love with love,” the older sister leans forward and seemingly instinctively hugs her little sister. It is the moment and the power of the song that compels her!

Next up, outside of Sweetwater Coffee Shop, I set up so that when the music catches them and they turn to look, I’m looking right back at them, smiling knowingly. I set my sights on two women who I guess are a couple. I play Tommy Jones and the Shondells’ “Crystal Blue Persuasion.” Sitting at an outside table with my Americano (oh, how I love my coffee), waiting until they pass me on the sidewalk, heading toward the Fleetwood Diner. They get just the right distance away and I crank it:

Look over yonder  
What do you see?  
The sun is a risin’  
Most definitely.  
And right when it goes:  
A new day is comin’  
People are changin’  
— they look back, smile, then turn around and join hands and stroll on.



Some more of Willy Will’s songs for the street:

- “Promise” by When in Rome
- “Ya Bo Be There” by Michael McDonald and James Ingram
- “Fire and Rain” by James Taylor
- “Walking on a Dream” by Empire of the Sun
- “Everlasting Love” by Andy Gibb
- “Mary Jane” by Rick James

# Aussie ponders link between COVID-19 and President Trump

BILL PAPPAS  
AKA KANGAROO KEN  
Australian Groundcover correspondent

G’day mates! I hope you are all doing well in the good ole U S of A and are surviving the COVID-19 pandemic OK. I have a theory about this virus that I’m going to share with you. I think it will help you understand where it came from and why it finished up in your country.

So, sitting here, beer in hand and watching the kangaroos hop by in the land of Aus, I’ve been thinking about this COVID-19 thing. Here is my take on it, at the risk of being called a conspiracy theorist (or a birther, like your president).

On May 31, 2017, your president sent an email with the word “covfeke” in it. Now no one knew at the time what covfeke meant. But looking back, I think it meant COVID-19 (covfeke = COVID-19). It was code for a virus the USA had developed that they were about to spread in China as part of the trade war. This would have (and did) help bring

manufacturing back to the USA.

The Atlanta-based CDC, America’s preeminent disease-fighting agency, was providing public health assistance to nations around the world. The CDC was working in Wuhan, China to help stop outbreaks of contagious diseases from spreading globally. The CDC had worked in China for 30 years. But in 2018, the U.S. started withdrawing staff from China. The CDC’s China head-count shrunk to around 14 staffers, down from approximately 47 people since President Donald Trump took office in January 2017 (Reuters U.S. Legal News, March 26, 2020).


Unfortunately for the USA, Trump and his fellow conspirators didn’t plan on the virus spreading around the world and coming back to the United States. It was intended to cripple just China. Think of it like the USA dropping a nuclear bomb on China to destroy China and the wind blowing the radioactive particles back across the globe to the USA.

Now if this is not enough evidence, ask yourself, “Why did Trump pull the United States out of the World Health

Organisation?” Was it because he feared what they might discover if they looked too closely at the USA? There is also some evidence that the COVID-19 virus may have existed in the USA before it was discovered in China — possibly as far back as October 2019 — but was misdiagnosed at the time. Were these people used to test the virus and the evidence was then quickly buried?

Anyway, think about it mates: it’s possible your president started this virus.

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YouTube & Facebook



# Local campers and activists organize for housing justice

**LINDSAY CALKA**  
Layout editor and summer intern

*"Solidarity is another name for the kind of love that moves feet, hands, hearts, material goods, assistance, and sacrifice towards the pain, danger, misfortune, disaster, repression, or death of other persons or a whole people. The aim is to share with them and help them rise up, become free, claim justice, rebuild."*

— Jon Sobrino

In March, upon the onset of COVID-19, the Washtenaw County Commissioners and Ann Arbor City Council funded 48 isolation rooms at a local hotel to accommodate unsheltered people. These rooms, in addition to a handful of off-site locations through the Shelter Association of Washtenaw County and a few local churches sustaining their warming center programs well beyond the regular end date (April 1), were intended to slow down the spread of the virus and did so. However, many folks staying at the hotel have since been denied a room due to substance restrictions and other lifestyle barriers. The response to the virus needed to be executed quickly, but the efforts were insufficient in addressing the needs of our community's most vul-

nerable during a global pandemic.

Camping is a popular activity during Michigan summers. For some individuals, this activity is not an act of recreation, but a chosen way of life. And for others, camping is a necessity that is denied to them due to predatory laws and restrictive ordinances that criminalize homelessness. During the warm months, many individuals experiencing homelessness camp around the city. And despite the government providing insufficient resources to shelter folks, outdoor camps are still swept and policed under the pretense of illegal land occupation.

Local campers and activists came together this summer to pick up the slack, organized as Washtenaw Camp Outreach. The group's ultimate aim is to connect with others in the struggle, share resources and supplies, and assist others in living as they choose. WCO supports autonomous, self-led communities. WCO believes housing is a human right — whether that is a tent, apartment building or house. WCO defends everyone's right to a home without fear of being displaced.

WCO hosts bi-weekly barbecues at Wheeler Park (located at 200 Depot St. in Ann Arbor) to enjoy fellowship,

discuss issues affecting the community and build power. Recent initiatives championed by WCO have included approval of the Ann Arbor Affordable Housing Millage proposal by City Council, work to reinstall public bathrooms in Liberty Plaza and reforming policy on policing camps within county limits.



**WCO operates on the volunteered labor and supplies of community members. At the moment, we are seeking donations of camping stoves and fuel, lanterns, flashlights, batteries, socks, backpacks, tents, sleeping bags, bus tokens and supplies for bi-weekly BBQs. Please connect with us on Facebook (@washcampoutreach) to stay up-to-date on ways to get involved with our struggle for housing justice.**



**WCO members Greg, Tony and Lauren (left to right) at a Wheeler Park biweekly Sunday BBQ.**



**WCO collects camping gear, sanitation materials and other supplies to distribute in the community.**

## Is COVID-19 making it hard to make ends meet?

If you're struggling to keep up with rent, mortgage, or utilities payments, or need help paying for food, childcare, or gas for your car the **Barrier Buster Network** is here to support you.



**Visit [Washtenaw.org/2818](https://www.washtenaw.org/2818) or contact one of these Barrier Busters agencies to help you pay your bills as soon as possible:**

### Housing Access for Washtenaw County

Phone: 734.961.1999

Website: [housingaccess.net](https://housingaccess.net)

### SOS Community Services

Phone: 734.484.5411

Website: [www.soscs.org](https://www.soscs.org)

### Washtenaw Health Plan

Phone: 734.544.3030

Website: [www.washtenaw.org/WHP](https://www.washtenaw.org/WHP)

### Jewish Family Services

Phone: 734.769.0209

Website: [jfsannarbor.org](https://jfsannarbor.org)

# Statement on Murder/Suicide in Ypsilanti

**Statement issued by SafeHouse Center  
BARBARA NIESS-MAY  
Executive Director**

On July 16, SafeHouse Center learned through social media that Courtney Neely had been murdered by her former partner, Michael Taylor, on July 15 in Ypsilanti. After he murdered her, he committed suicide. Their four-month-old baby survived. This happened despite the fact that Courtney sought help for the situation. She had left, sought safety, gotten a new place and started a new life for herself and her infant child.

As an organization, we are saddened by this unnecessary loss of life. And, it is compounded by the fact that there was no public mention of this murder/suicide by the news media, law enforcement or the criminal system as a whole. Courtney died because of domestic violence. Making no mention of this murder perpetuates the belief that domestic violence is the fault of the victim and that her life was not important.

There are critical components to this case that we believe the public should know about:

- Courtney was a Black woman. We believe that society still views Black people, women in particular, as dispensable — thus it was not considered important to report her violent death. It is as though it never happened. The lack of awareness regarding violence toward Black women must be addressed in order to ensure that the rights of those at the intersections of marginalized identities are protected.
- The murderer, her former partner and father of her child, had been arrested for assaulting Courtney on April 15. The judge released Michael Taylor on a personal recognizance bond on April 17. Sadly, personal recognizance bonds are all-too-common and this practice needs serious re-evaluation in our community.
- Washtenaw County partners (law enforcement, prosecution, judges, social services) review fatalities of those who were victims of domestic violence, and relevant representatives will be invited to participate in a review to better understand what could have been done to save Courtney's life.

Domestic violence continues at extraordinary levels in our community. Speaking the truth about how it impacts survivors is critical if we as a community expect to end domestic violence. Our community needs to know about the threatening ways in which domestic violence is present in the lives of survivors.

Also, survivors deserve to know how dangerous assailants can be. Assailants will use all the tactics they have to gain and maintain power and control over their partners. There is help and support in our community.

*SafeHouse Center is the organization in Washtenaw County that provides help and support to survivors of sexual assault and domestic violence. Services include 24/7 HelpLine, emergency shelter, children's services, counseling, support groups, legal advocacy including assistance with obtaining Personal Protection Orders, training and community education. Services can be accessed through our helpline, 734-995-5444. For more information please visit our website at [www.safehousecenter.org](https://www.safehousecenter.org).*

# Tips for good brain health

**JIM CLARK**  
Groundcover vendor No. 139

As a former educator, I've spent a lot of time studying neurology as it pertained to pedagogy. During my time of homelessness, a few of these lessons came into play. Our brain needs the same kind of nourishment to function as the rest of our body. Without it, the mind and body cannot function properly.

Water is critical for brain maintenance. It was very difficult to acquire clean water when I had no income. With the Flint water crisis still recent in our state's history, filling bottles from public fountains felt precarious.

In regards to food, I noticed the soup kitchen food was lacking in protein and high in sugar. These affect body function, which has a direct impact on how well our brains work.

Finally, the biggest threat to good mental hygiene was the lack of human contact. As a homeless person, I had a hard time trusting

others. Those who became "foxhole friends" had instability issues of their own. In addition, the feeling of being abandoned by my family was crushing. Both of these triggered stress hormones in me that are unhealthy for our brains.

The added imposition of social distance, while necessary for physical health, has the negative mirror-effect of shunning. To combat the spread of disease, we keep physically apart. Meanwhile, our brains need *meaningful contact* with each other in order to be healthy.

I had never been on the receiving end of as much active ignoring as I did when I was homeless. It triggered a kind of shame that is toxic to the brain.

So, here are some suggestions for good brain health you can offer those you meet who are homeless:

- Share clean water
- Share food high in vitamins and protein as well as low in processed sugar
- Offer a smile and a kind word

## ➡ EVICTIONS from page 4

the night by a white mob; hundreds of residents died. The handful of traumatized survivors fled, abandoning their beloved community fondly known as Black Wall Street.

Another story from Coates' influential article is a reference to writer and historian Isabel Wilkerson, author of the celebrated 2014 book "Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of America's Great Migration." Wilkerson told the story of Eddie Earvin, a spinach picker who fled Mississippi in 1963 after being made to work at gunpoint. In the story, Earvin said, "you didn't talk to nobody about it. You had to sneak away."

A lot of Black folks who faced danger and oppression in the South fled to Northern cities like Chicago, Cleveland, Detroit and New York City. Their residential housing opportunities were even worse than those shown in photo-journalist Jacob Riis's book "How the Other Half Lives."

Black people across the country were largely cut out of the legitimate home mortgage market. The Fair Housing Act of 1968 tried to nullify housing discrimination and restrictive covenants in zoning. But having missed out on the post-war opportunities to get a foothold in the housing market, only undesirable neighborhoods with poor appreciation prospects were attainable for most.

The Great Depression was a period of high unemployment, high eviction and high housing insecurity. The Franklin D. Roosevelt Administration and Congress created the Homeowners Loan Corporation in 1933 and Federal Housing Administration in 1934. The goal was to help insure private mortgages which helped prospective homeowners during the Great Depression and beyond. However, the insured private mortgages were not made available to most African Americans from 1934 until the Fair Housing Act of 1968. In cities like Chicago, explained Coates in a 2014 article for The Atlantic, "the FHA adopted a system of maps that rated

neighborhoods according to their perceived stability. Green Areas had symbols of 'A' or In Demand while predominantly Black neighborhoods were rated 'D,' and were usually considered ineligible for FHA backing."

According to Coates, one white homeowner once said that his Black neighbor was probably a nice guy, "but every time I look at him, I see \$2,000 drop off the value of my house." Coates also observed, "It was the [federal-government-backed] Home Owners' Loan Corporation, not a private trade association, that pioneered the practice of redlining, selectively granting loans and insisting that any property it insured be covered by a restrictive covenant — a clause in the deed forbidding the sale of the property to anyone other than Whites."

## Coping with COVID-19 evictions and the affordable housing crisis

As of August 20, there were more than 172,000 deaths from COVID-19 in America. Evictions and homelessness will continue to put the lives of the poor and people of color at severe risk.

The following policies are frequently recommended by leading advocacy groups:

1. Congress should pass a national moratorium on evictions until the COVID-19 pandemic is over;
2. Congress should appropriate \$200 billion for pandemic rental assistance;
3. Congress should pass Universal Rent Voucher legislation for all eligible low-income Americans;
4. State and local governments should make legal representation a right for tenants facing eviction;
5. Federal, state and local governments should resume building more affordable housing for the low-income population;
6. Communities should enact a local millage for affordable housing and rental emergency help.

# Cucumber cream cheese spread

**ELIZABETH BAUMAN**  
Groundcover contributor

## Ingredients

2/3 of a cucumber, peeled and finely chopped  
4 green onions, finely chopped  
8 oz. block of cream cheese, softened  
1 tsp. Worcestershire sauce  
1/8 tsp. salt



## Directions

Combine all the ingredients in a bowl and beat with an electric mixer until smooth. Cover and refrigerate overnight for flavors to blend. Enjoy on bagels or crackers.

# Rating system for community meals

**JOHN L.**  
Groundcover contributor

A homeless man named Will living in Jackson, Miss. created categories of meals available to the homeless community. Ironically, some elaborate food served at soup kitchens is avoided by those most in need. People sleeping outdoors or in their vehicle avoid foods that cause them to use the bathroom overnight. They prefer a sandwich, chips and cookies in a brown paper bag rather than casserole, fruit and green beans in a carry-out container. A snowbird brought this north when he traveled from the Gulf Coast region:

**Homeless-friendly:** These are sandwiches, soups, thrown-together meals. Sandwiches are usually two

pieces of bread with a slice of meat in the middle, no condiments; two cookies in a plastic sandwich bag. Entrees often have random vegetables mixed with other random ingredients. Meals you would not have at a normal dinner table.

**Homestyle:** This is normal fare or the type of dinner served at someone's house. This is food prepared for a family dinner.

**Restaurant:** This is restaurant food and barbecues.

**High-class:** This is steak or non-traditional foods that come from catered events and parties. It could be hors d'oeuvres, cold cut trays, stuffed shrimp. This is food you don't eat on a regular basis.



## St. Francis invites you to join in Mass by LiveStream:

Spanish: [stfrancisa2.com/misa](http://stfrancisa2.com/misa)  
English: [stfrancisa2.com/mass](http://stfrancisa2.com/mass)

## Regular Mass Times

**Mon-Thurs 9:15am**

**Fri 8:15am**

**Sat 5pm**  
7pm (Spanish)

**Sun 10:30am**

During the LiveStream mass, make a spiritual communion by praying this or a similar prayer:

*My Jesus, I believe that You are present in the Most Holy Sacrament. I love You above all things, and I desire to receive You into my soul. Since I cannot at this moment receive You sacramentally, come at least spiritually into my heart. I embrace You as if You were already there and unit myself wholly to You. Never permit me to be separated from you. Amen.*

## PUZZLE SOLUTIONS

4	6	8	2	3	1	5	7	9
9	2	7	5	6	4	8	3	1
5	3	1	7	9	8	6	4	2
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1	4	9	6	8	3	2	5	7
7	8	2	9	1	5	4	6	3
2	7	6	3	5	9	1	8	4
8	9	5	1	4	7	3	2	6
3	1	4	8	2	6	7	9	5

1	D	E	W		T	A	M	E		8	G	A	P		11	T	O	M
14	O	R	E		15	O	P	A	L		16	O	N	A	D	A	R	E
18	R	I	N	G	19	T	R	U	E		20	B	A	R	E	X	A	M
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40	E	R	A		41	L	O	V	E	42	I	R	D		44	I	A	N
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64	Y	O	G	I	S	M				66	L	I	F	E	R	I	N	G
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